Construction of railway line between Khurdha and Bolangir in Orissa

423. SHRI JAGADISH JANI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a proposal under Government's consideration to connect Bolangir in Western Orissa with Khurdha in coastal Orissa by Rail;

(b) whether a line is proposed to be constructed via Phulbani for that purpose; and

(c) if so, the steps taken to implement that proposal ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) to (c) A survey was carried out for Khurdha Road-Balangir (289 Km. new BG railway line in 1986. The project was then estimated to cost Rs. 209 crores with 1% return on investment. An alternative alignment via Phulbani was also surveyed but the same was found very costly and with steeper gradients and as such could not be considered.

The proposal was sent to the Planning Commission for consideration and approval for development of backward areas during VIII Five Year Plan. Planning Commission has directed that the project be referred to the Working Group alongwith similar other projects on the basis of justification and *inter-se* priorities for consideration in the VIII plan.

Closure of Paradeep Phosphates Ltd.

424. SHRI JAGADISH JANI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Paradeep Phosphates Limited, a joint venture of India and Nauru set up at Paradeep in Orissa hasr ecently been shut down;

(b) whether that plant was closed so many times earlier as well;

(c) if so, the reasons of the frequent closure of the plant; and

(d) the steps taken so far to avoid the circumstances or factors leading to the frequent closure of the plant?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI DEVI LAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The closures of the plant have been due to non-availability of imported phosphoric acid and ammonia as well as industrial relations problems.

(d) The situation will improve when Phase-II of the Project which envisages captive production of phosphoric acid is completed and dependence on imported phosphoric acid is reduced.

Curtailment of quota of edible—oils of the States

425. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any curtailment of quota of edible oils to States recently;

(b) if so, which are the States affected by this general curtailment;

(c) what are the reasons for curtailing the quota of edible oils to States; and

(d) whether the demand of the Government of Maharashtra for increasing their quota of edible oil has been accepted ?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA): (a) to (c): Allocation of edible oils to the States for PDS is made on month to month basis depending upon demands made by the States/UTs, stock of imported edible oil available with the Government, availability of indigenous oils in the market and prices thereof, and pace of lifting of edible oil allocated to them, earlier. Based on the above considerations, the overall allocation of edible oil was reduced in December, 1989 when the festival months were over and flush season of edible oils commenced. Allocation of oil has now been increased for March, 1990 which is slightly higher than the allocation made during the corresponding period of the previous year.

(d) The demands of all States is far in excess of the imported edible oil with the Government. The allocation is therefore made on the basis of actual imports. Maharashtra is generally allocated the highest quantity of edile oil in the country.

Prices of onion in Maharashtra

426. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the prices of onion have come down recently from Rs. 250/- to Rs. 90/- per quintal in some districts of Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor ;

(c) whether Government have received any proposal for purchase of onion under the Market Intervention Scheme to save farmers from heavy losses: and

(d) if so, the details of the time bound programme launched in this regard ?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI DEVI LAL): (a) The onion prices which were ruling in the range of Rs. 60—Rs. 286 per quintal depending upon the quality of onion during November, 1989 came down to the level of Rs. 40—Rs. 146 per quintal during December, 1989 2nd to Rs. 40 to Rs. 100 per quintal in January, 1990 in some Districts of Maharashtra.

(b) The State Government reported that there had been a bumper crop of onion on account of adequate back up services and favourable climate during the kharif crop of onion.

(c) and (d) To save the farmers from distress sales, the Central Government directed National Agricultural Cooperativ Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) to make purchases of 'Pole' variety of onion under the Market Intervention Scheme @ Rs. 70/- per quintal FAQ in Nasik District w.e.f. 2-1-1990. NAFED purchased 31,781 MTs of onion upto 28-2-1990 under the scheme.

Prices of agricultural produce

427. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan or scheme to compute the prices of agricultural produce on economic grounds and give remunerative prices to the farmers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI DEVI LAL): (a) and (b) The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices recommends the procurement/minimum support prices for major agricultural commodities after taking into account not only a comprehensive overview of the